

F O R C E S 2 0 1 7



INTRODUCTION

FORCES 2017 REFLECTS A TIME OF CHANGE, one of those periods when the earth seems to tilt awkwardly on its axis – as it does from time to time. Thus, we are challenged to see if we are all thrown into some off-balanced, disastrous wobble, or conversely, to see if it's time for thoughtful assessment and to methodically catch our balance. It's almost as if Atlas, having taken his discomfort as long as possible, set down the earth for a moment to scratch his nose; we must look at our world anew when it is shaken; we must rise to meet the challenge, even if we didn't or did necessarily want it. Consider how, in this issue, cancer brings two estranged sisters back together rather than destroying their relationship, how an African American daughter embraces being a seventh-generation female acknowledging the drastic changes over those generations and that that is what makes her her, a breakup that leads a woman not to depression but to empowerment, a loss of a love that leads one to cherish memories taken for granted rather than drown in her suffering, a woman empowered by her final conscious choice to break from expected feminine stereotypes and to finally embrace herself, or a church congregation able to forgive a church shooter, even when the law cannot – these are not the responses expected to those “wobbly moments” at all, at all, at all. *FORCES 2017* is an uplifting issue celebrating the moments of our lives that define us – in spite of ourselves – as human and humane.

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FORCES Editor – R. Scott Yarbrough

CONTENTS



5 **SINTRA PORTUGAL**
Amanullah Khan

6 **IT'S PERSONAL**
Rebecca Hays

7 **WRITER'S BLOCK**
Abigail Hitt

UNTITLED
Alfred Long

8 **CHALK HANDS**
Shelby Hotz
AT TWILIGHT
Jiaan Powers

9-12 **AMARANTHINE**
Trexiea Hernandez

13 **WALK THE STEPS**
Andrew Barba
**YOU WILL NOT
DEFINE ME**
Crystal Lee

14 **MORNING RAYS**
Shelby Hotz

15 **BELIEVER**
Mamie Walters

16 **ATLAS**
Amy Myrick

17 **TEMPLE**
Craig Erickson

18 **WATCHFUL EYE**
Alex Giovinazzo

19-22 **BALANCE OF POWER**
Hannah Hightower

20-21 **STOMP**
Kelly McNett

22 **REHEARSAL**
Samantha Mills

23 **LABORS OF
CHEMISTRY**
Teddy Lishan Desta

THE BEES KNEES
Rebecca Hays

24 **GHOSTED MEMORIES**
Hayley Earnest

25 **WALL OF STONE**
Beth Turner Ayers

26 **FULL MOON CHURCH**
Alex Giovinazzo

27 **THE GLOCK &
THE CROSS**
Teddy Lishan Desta

28 **UNTITLED**
Michael Nguyen

29 **EMPTY SPACE**
Jessica Gonsoulin

SHAGGON WAGGON
Hayley Earnest

30	AN EXPLORER'S DREAM Amy Myrick	40	VIRGIN LIPS Kelly McNett	47	SEVENTH WINDOW TO THE WORLD BELOW Anaiyah Delight Walker Nirisha Garimella
30-31	MOON SET AT CORFE CASTLE Craig Erickson	41	I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE Anna Boling	48	CAPTURE ONE Alberto Gutierrez
32	DOWNTOWN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS Anna Boling	42	MUSE ING Michael Leyzerzon	49	SHE SHALL HAVE CULTURE Linda Ann Suddarth
33-36	A DEEPENED PERSPECTIVE: UNDER THE BRIDGE Brianne Kankel	43	VEILED LIPS Kelly McNett		PEARS Alberto Gutierrez
35	THRIFT STORE CORNERS Anna Boling	44	UNTITLED Michael Nguyen	50	NAVAHO TEA Anna Boling
36	CITY'S TEARS Andrew Barba	45	ON LOSING A SISTER Amanullah Khan	51-53	THAT GUY Claire Parde
37	LA MAR Molly Brown	46	SELF INFATUATION Amanullah Khan	54	UNTITLED Michael Nguyen
38	NEVER ENDING STORY David Knape	47	EMORY PEAK Shelby Hotz	55-57	WHAT THE RED WITCH REQUIRES Natalie VanHecke
39	TO LOVE A GOD Abigail Hitt	48	R IS FOR REGRET Anna Boling	58-60	THE LOVE GAME A SPOKEN WORD Kelly Anne Tiece
	BLOOD SWEAT Alex Giovinazzo	49	IT ALL BEGAN WITH A THOUGHT Sylvia S. Medel	59-60	CHRISTINE Alfred Long
		50	LIMESTONE AND RIVERS Andrew Barba		
		51	RETRIEVAL Jiaan Powers		



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SINTRA PORTUGAL Amanullah Khan



IT'S PERSONAL Rebecca Hays

WRITER'S BLOCK

Abigail Hitt

I never understood the appeal of poetry
Until I watched you dance around that dimly lit cave
A bottle of cheap wine between your fingertips
And strawberry dripping from your lips
Like a promise.

When you shouted at the dirt staining the walls
Words of those past,
Reciting Whitman and Ginsberg,
I had never seen anything more beautiful.
It felt like awakening from a lifetime of slumber
When you wrote haikus across my spine

In gentle cursive
Script, which flows through your whispers
And falls into place

Now when I look at my notes
I see a dozen lines of meter
Scratched out, replaced with nothingness
Because that's all you left,
Darkness and broken scribbled prose in a margin.

Never was I a better writer than with you
Or a better version of myself, fearless.
And I never cared much about the voices of the dead
Until yours became one of them.



UNTITLED Alfred Long



CHALK HANDS Shelby Hotz

AT TWILIGHT

Jiaan Powers

I watch the blackbirds
Ink spots across the snow.
I watch their tail feathers
Fold against the night sky.
Silent as my mother's hands.

AMARANTHINE

Trexiea Hernandez

Winner of Writers' Bloc Competition

"YOU FEELING OKAY TODAY?"

THE FAMILIAR QUESTION HUNG IN THE AIR AND I IGNORED THE AWKWARDNESS THAT CAME WITH A QUESTION NOT REPLIED TO IMMEDIATELY.

"I'M ALRIGHT," SHE TOLD ME.

She said it with a slight shake in her voice and with a slowness that made me believe that she always chose her words before she spoke. Sometimes it was annoying, how slowly she spoke, but there was a solid assurance that she meant every syllable she managed to breathe; even if what she said made no sense.

For instance, one time, she rambled on and on about her best friend's funeral. She spoke of how the sky was beautiful and that it was almost insulting because, in her own words, "it was too lovely for such a grievous occasion." As she continued to describe the funeral and how the open casket was "made with a simple elegance," I couldn't help but think to myself...

What was a funeral?

What was a casket?

What was grievous? I had never heard that word before. I thought it was some type of supplement.

Eventually though, I had to look those things up in the Information Index. (You know what they are, don't you? Oh, you don't? Well, you can look it up later.)

As I tended to her IVs and various medical instruments, I listened. In our world, full of distractions and whatnot, I did the impossible. I shut up at let someone else talk. Sometimes it was hard to do so but her stories, oh her stories! Those things were worth shutting up for. I would go home and I would think of her Story of The Day; even after I had gone to bed. I would dream about those things.

After years worth of listening, I was comfortable enough to ask questions. A person can only simply listen for so long, you know, before the questions take over.

"I never got to say goodbye to my best friend," she said one day—out of the blue, "The last time I saw her she was driving off in her car...I said I was going to meet her before she left...I was late..."

My eyebrows furrowed with slight confusion. Car? Yet another thing I noted to look up in the Information Index. (Oh, you don't know what that is either? Ah well, another thing for you to look up.)

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said, "Did that make it harder to go to her...whatdidyoudoallit?...Oh. Her funeral?"

"What?! I never went to her funeral! I would have remembered that!"

"But you said—"

"No! I never went. I would have remembered!"

The logical side of me rebelled against that statement and against my cordiality. "Not really. You're 110 years old. Loss of memory is to be expected."

"I'm not 110 years old! Why, I'm... I-I'm 35."

It was odd to hear her say that because she was still speaking with that slow, oldness, drawl that I had come to grow used to.

"Uh...No...that's not reality, Last. You're old. That is fact."

"Don't argue with me. I know what I know. Don't you go trying to convince me anything different."

She said it so firmly and her chocolate eyes were so sure that I did what she said. I argued no further. Besides, she was surely senile at this point. There was no use in arguing against someone so far gone.

"Oh, I wish I hadn't been late," she continued, "I loved her. Oh, I loved her. And my sorrow when I watched her drive out of my life..."

The Last Mortal paused, letting a heavy silence settle around us. For a while, no sound was made except for the sound of the machines keeping her alive. She had her hands clasped together in her lap and her gaze was far, far, away.

"Are you...sad?" I asked.

"Sad? No, no. I'm mourning. It's an action deeper than sad, darker. It's more consuming. It feels like dying but worse."

That made no sense...Dying but worse? I touched the watch on my wrist. I glanced down at it. The watch glowed, telling me that

"WHY WOULD YOU FEEL SORRY FOR ME? YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S OLD; THE ONE WHOSE BODY IS BREAKING DOWN ON HER. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO DIE AND TURN INTO DUST. EVERYTHING WILL OUT-EXIST YOU. INCLUDING ME."

my vital signs were normal and that my cell regenerator was working properly. How... How could anything be worse than dying?

She must have seen the questions swimming just beneath my irises because then she said, “You have no idea what I’m talking about, do you?”

“No,” I shook my head and released a chuckle. This was preposterous. Talks of something worse than death and feelings darker than sadness. Senile, I told myself, she is senile. “Not a clue.”

“Then I feel sorry for you.”

The chuckle died in my throat and I gave her another confused gaze.

“Why would you feel sorry for me? You’re the one who’s old; the one whose body is breaking down on her. You’re the one who’s going to die and turn into dust. Everything will out-exist you. Including me.” I hold up my wrist so she can bask in the azure glow of my watch—my indicator that all our advanced technology was seamlessly and tirelessly working to keep me immortal. Suddenly her Sleep Alarm sounded, startling me for the first time. This was part of the routine but tonight it had made my heart jump in my throat. I blame it on the vortex of confusion that was this conversation. It had entranced me and the alarm had broken the spell.

“It’s time to sleep,” she said.

“Yes. It is.”

I prepared her for bed and my hand moved to push down the Serum button and I saw

one of her IVs fill up with the pale, diluted, blue sleeping serum. I watched as the liquid entered her bloodstream. A strict amount of sleep was required to help aid our cell regenerators achieve their purpose of infinite longevity, I recited to myself; my favorite excerpt of the Amaranthine Commandments. My lips said their usual goodnights and I turned to leave. However, before I could leave, the Last Mortal grabbed hold of my wrist.

“Do you know why I feel sorry for you?”

“My apologies, I thought that this conversation was over—”

“Do you know why I feel sorry for you?” she repeated.

I tried squirming out of her grasp but she held fast. Where was this old woman getting her strength?

“I-I don’t know,” I finally answered, “It doesn’t make sense. You’re the one who’s going to die. You’re the only one I’ve ever met who says that they’ve felt like they’re dying but worse. What does that even mean?”

“Exactly,” the Last whispered—as if she was sharing a secret. Her eyes were filled with a queer childlike shine, looking more like she was about to gossip with me rather than share a secret. She pulled me closer and despite a bit of hesitance, I leaned in to listen to her words, “I’m not going to live forever. But that just means I’m the only one who knows what living, but more, feels like,” she breathed into my attentive ears.

And with that, her grip on my wrist slackened and she fell back into her pillow. The drugs must have kicked in.

That night, while she slept soundly in her hospital room, I was kept awake by what she said to me.

Living, but better...How could she know how it feels to "live, but more" if she was dying?

I didn't understand her.

She's dead now.

(But of course you knew that, the media covered it for days. 'END OF AN ERA', they said. 'END OF AN ERA', they exclaimed. 'END OF AN ERA', they plastered all over the hologram newspapers and building-wide televisions. End of an Era, indeed...We should have been mourning her death, the death of another human being...But instead we celebrated it. It was the End of an Era and the Ushering in of the Age of Glorious Immortality, they said. The Last Mortal Human was gone...And they didn't even care to know her name...No one cared. No one except me.)

I understand her now. I've understood her for a long time now. It wasn't until I discontinued my stem cell regeneration, until I decided to not live forever, did I get her. They can say what they like about me, about my decision and how stupid and crazy it was...I don't regret it. I...loved every moment I lived from that point on. I ceased to merely exist. I loved every sunset, every person who came my way (as best I could, I mean) because I didn't know if that sunset was my last or if that person was the last person I would ever speak to again. Things mean more when they have the possibility of being your last.

...So, is that it?

Do you have all you want for your interview? I have an appointment to keep, you know.

I must tell Thecla that I know why she felt sorry for me. She'll be thrilled.





WALK THE STEPS Andrew Barba

YOU WILL NOT DEFINE ME

Crystal Lee

If you only knew the pain you've caused,
If you only knew the loneliness you've brought,
If you only knew the many lives you've ruined,
If you only knew that you've tried to break me,
But you didn't.

I will no longer let you cause pain.
I will no longer feel lonely.
I will no longer let you ruin my life.
I will no longer let you define me until my last day.
Cancer, you will not define me.



MORNING RAYS Shelby Hotz

BELIEVER

Mamie Walters

Oh, it is merely a mist

Or a myth

This vaporous being from the past.

Or is it only a gas?

Windows are open from each side of the room

Yet it lingers still.

It is not from the rushing of trees

Sending the fall breeze that I begin to chill.

Do I dare move? I ponder that If I do,

Perhaps it leaves my sight or is provoked to attack

Or something worse.

So I sit - as if I am Michelangelo's Carrera and wonder

Would he have carved of me a fool.

Who would believe such a curse? Or is it a gift?

Why me? I find it best to speak nothing of this.

Doubters, fools will not be

And questions and ridicule shall persist;

And to think I once was in their shoes.

For I know not that it is heavenly or from the pit

But this I surely know,

You don't believe until you have seen with your own eyes,

IT.

ATLAS

Amy Myrick

I wish that I
like Atlas
held the world on my back.

Then I could set it down
and stop its spinning for an hour or two.
End the dizzying circles of madness
and allow the calming stillness
to settle in my bones.

I would stretch out my aching arms and
breathe cooling air deep into my chest,
sit down among the stars and
stare into the vast nothingness.

And when at last,
I, the great titan Atlas,
had realized
that even I was small and insignificant
among the scope of
stars and
planets and
space,

I would pick up the Earth again and
hoist that mighty weight
with the knowledge

It is not too much to bear.





TEMPLE Craig Erickson



WATCHFUL EYE Alex Giovinazzo

BALANCE OF POWER

Hannah Hightower

Winner of Writers' Bloc Prose Contest

GIVEN THAT SOCIETY HOLDS MASSIVE INFLUENCE OVER ITS CITIZENS, IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT IT IS MORE POWERFUL—MORE VITAL—THAN THE INDIVIDUAL. THE INDIVIDUAL, AFTER ALL, SEEMS VIRTUALLY POWERLESS TO STAND AGAINST SOCIETY'S TYRANNY, FOR DOING SO OFTEN YIELDS DISASTROUS RESULTS. For instance, a man who defies his society's gender roles will most likely be rejected by his society, an occurrence that he will certainly find unpleasant. Consequently, the negative outcomes of his defiance could make him hesitant to attempt socially-unacceptable behavior, robbing him of his power to influence society. However, the same situation could have the opposite effect: instead of stealing his will to defy society, his rejection by society could motivate him to further challenge societal norms, and could even result in him asserting influence over society. He could, in fact, begin to change his society, exerting the same power over it as it once did over him. In this way, then, the individual and society are equal, for each has the potential to overtake the other.

The influence of society—its ability to overtake the individual--stems from the fact that most individuals are not conscious of society's influence. Unlike government, society is not an institution that humans intentionally create; humans do not officially set societal decrees and mandates, for instance. Instead, society arises from the shared paradigms, customs, and traditions of a majority population. This means that it is rarely established formally—and although it must be taught to the individuals living within it, society is seldom learned through official means. Indeed, the laws of society are usually absorbed through simply observing the behavior of others. For instance, a girl learns which behaviors are socially acceptable for females by seeing her mother's actions rewarded or punished by society.

Because they are imparted in such a subtle manner, social norms are difficult to identify—and consequently, equally difficult to resist. The American social norm of affording others—especially strangers—"personal space" is not immediately

recognizable as a social norm because it is so commonplace. It is, in fact, almost instinctive, so most people do not give a second thought to the behavior. It is simply accepted without question, allowing the norm to be further entrenched in the minds of individuals. In a way, it is not unlike the parable of the frog in the pot: those who live in society do not recognize the rules and regulations that are being imparted on them, just as the frog in the parable does not realize

he is being boiled alive when the water's temperature gradually increases.

The unconscious adherence to society's laws means that individuals are prone to be swayed by whatever societal "voice" is strongest. That is, the opinion that is most influential—the one that is heard by the majority of those in a society—will be almost unquestioningly followed, like a steer being goaded to the slaughterhouse. For instance, the values and opinions

THIS "HIVE-MINDSET" TENDENCY OF SOCIETY IS BOTH ITS GREATEST STRENGTH AND MOST DEVASTATING WEAKNESS. IT IS A STRENGTH WHEN THE "VOICE" AGREES WITH SOCIETY'S VALUES AND CUSTOMS; IT IS A WEAKNESS WHEN THE "VOICE" DIVERGES FROM THE SOCIETAL NORMS.



explicitly and implicitly shown in media are likely to be adopted by the society that views it because it cannot fathom questioning it. It is used to not questioning things, after all; as mentioned previously, society is accustomed to following implicit laws such as the rules of “personal space.” In a sense, society has a veritable “hive-mindset,” the shared paradigms of society forcing it to think as a single organism. If society’s loudest voice instructs society to take a certain stance on an issue, society will willingly oblige, a muscle that cannot resist the instructions of the nervous system.

This “hive-mindset” tendency of society is both its greatest strength and most devastating weakness. It is a strength when the “voice” agrees with society’s values and customs; it is a weakness when the “voice” diverges from the societal

norms. For instance, the rhetoric of Donald Trump does not threaten the particular society he panders to, for his words do not contradict its norms and beliefs. In fact, his rhetoric reinforces that society’s paradigm, strengthening the overall influence society holds over its citizens. However, it is likely that that same group could be implicitly influenced by a different opinion via media; that society could watch a television program, for example, that subversively contradicts their paradigms. Given its vulnerability to influence, the group could begin to accept the subtle rhetoric without question, weakening its own paradigms while instituting others.

Like Trump’s influence over a particular society, a single person can become the “voice,” altering society’s norms. When this occurs, the balance of power between



STOMP Kelly McNett

individuals and society begins to shift; instead of society holding influence over a single person, the single person holds influence over society. Rather than reflecting the image of society, mirroring its beliefs and traditions, the individual molds society to resemble his own likeness. Prior to the influence of William Wilberforce, who was instrumental in the abolishment of the English slave trade, 18th-19th century England bore the image of its society, which was deeply entrenched in the notion that the slave trade was morally permissible. After Wilberforce's death, the society had begun to mirror Wilberforce's anti-slavery ideals. He overtook society rather than it overtaking him.

Of course, the ideals of individuals can be equally unjust—that is, they fail to render “to each man his own rights”—as those

imposed by society (qtd. in Lewis 85). Like a painting that is incomplete, each entity, whether it is society or a single individual, has the potential to become unspeakably beautiful or obscene. As a corollary, the ideals of modern American society urge citizens to be tolerant and respectful toward those who are different. On the other hand, the rhetoric of Adolf Hitler, a single man, persuaded a nation to slaughter those who did not fit his concept of normalcy. The distinction between angelic benevolence and demonic tyranny lies merely in the nature of the entity, not its structure, for each entity has an equal potential for control. A man can just as soon shape an entire society as an entire empire can mold a single man.

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REHEARSAL Samantha Mills

LABORS OF CHEMISTRY

Teddy Lishan Desta

When I saw you that day
you were in much distress
over an unbalanced equation
that you feared would leave
the whole world, the cosmos
at risk; at the brink of chaos.

Ah! But only for this missing molecule
which you couldn't tell, where it disappeared
to what thing it morphed; to which place it went.
What a loss!

That is why when I saw you next
you were running fast, down
the corridors of the universe
chasing the missing molecule;
not to leave the universe at risk —
unbalanced, unhinged?

When I saw you last
you were happy-faced
for the Right Side and Left Side
that were seamlessly in balance.
By Gosh!
no wonder you were happy-faced
as you met no wrath, no grudges
no anger, no rebukes
from the teachers, the sages —
from Dalton, or Lavoisier
Cavendish, or Medvedev.



THE BEES KNEES Rebecca Hays



GHOSTED MEMORIES Hayley Earnest

WALL OF STONE

Beth Turner Ayers

My brother called to say the words
She could not say herself - to me
Her sister, who shared her bed when small
The one who walked, side by side
Never breaking stride on dark mornings
In heat and cold we challenged the status quo
The two of us together, the "papergirls"
Later walking side by side at the edge of the sea
Gathering shells and dreams

The wall went up - but I did not build it
Did not place uneven wobbly stones
In a haphazard pile, between us
Did not spread concrete between each stone
But I did not try to scale the wall
To peek at the other side
Or reach out to dislodge a single stone
Did not search for a path around it
To get a glimpse of my little sister

Once in a while I would tap on the wall
Like the Morse code that passed between us
In the darkness of our shared room, long ago
Little response floated to my ear
So I waited with words unspoken
Allowing my baseless perception
To restrain my hammer and chisel
While she did the same - each of us assuming
And time passed around us...

So much time that wisdom came with age
And an email came with more than a brief
reply
A phone call lasted with laughter and shared
thought
The wall began to crumble - slowly but surely
Then suddenly, it was toppled by cancer
Another shared experience
That opened the line of communication
And I began to realize that wall of stone
Had always been unnecessary fabrication



FULL MOON CHURCH Alex Giovinazzo

THE GLOCK & THE CROSS

Teddy Lishan Desta

*In memoriam of the Emanuel African Methodist
Episcopal Church, Charleston, NC*

When *Darkness* hit hard,

knocking the *Light* out

And in a pool of blood,

It hissed triumphant;

Though the *Light* reeled,

Though it staggered,

It roared back;

It rose from the dust,

On its two feet to stand.

Yes, it did stand!

The *Light* went into action;

It launched a counter-attack —

by extending its hands

by outstretching its arms

it conquered overnight!

It held millions in its clutch;

until they cried out —

in muffled voice:

“Let us go; we can’t breathe!”

Held tightly; pinned to your chest

What do they hear for a response?

Only this:

The deep murmurs of an enlarged heart.

[That is too tender to register a hurt.]

What do they see? Only a paradox

A holy *Enigma* that is laid on a cross —

A soul that is gashed, naked, and crucified.

Tested in a fiery furnace, in a crucible of faith.

A heart that is taught how to cry out, in agape-love:

“Father forgive them; what they do, they know not.”



UNTITLED Michael Nguyen

EMPTY SPACE

Jessica Gonsoulin

Black fog fills the air,
Flocks of glaring lights overhead.
The turn is
Immediately after the yellow sign--
But how soon?
I follow, a foot away from the white
Line painted down the middle,
Avoiding driving over the side
Into a ditch or ravine
And becoming one of those cars
Silently parked on the side of the road.

Driving over the bridge
Is more like flying a plane
Or Christmas shopping on Black Friday.
It is the crossroad for six streets.
Nobody is sure where to go,
Especially the first in line,
The first time.
Right is the Shopping Center.
The entrance to the overpass has moved
left.
The street goes straight ahead--
Or you can drive over a curb
Into empty space.



SHAGGON WAGGON Hayley Earnest

AN EXPLORER'S DREAM

Amy Myrick
- for Jeff

If the world were lain flat
 like old cartographers' maps
 with monster's barred teeth poised in each corner
and time instead shaped into the globe
 rather than this linear dirge of days
 droning onward to yet another end,
would we be able to stop
 walking in these infernal rings -
 the searing death we all know too well -
and strap on our shiny armor,
 trudge forward on the straight path,
 do battle with the monster's teeth,
and see what lies beyond?



MOON SET AT CORFE CASTLE Craig Erickson



DOWNTOWN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS Anna Boling

**A DEEPENED PERSPECTIVE:
UNDER THE BRIDGE**

Brianne Kankel

I GREW UP AS THE ULTIMATE SPONGE TO THE WORDS OF MY PARENTS AND THE OTHER ADULTS AROUND ME. THE WORDS THEY POURED OUT WERE STORED PERMANENTLY, LATCHING ON IN MY MIND, AFFECTING HOW I WOULD VIEW PEOPLE FROM THEN ON. ACCORDING TO THEM, PEOPLE CHOSE TO BE HOMELESS. I was told that there are many options available for them to turn their lives around, and that they just had to want to change. The status of living on the streets was due to their own transgressions. As a consequence, their bad choices were holding them back from a better life. I was taught that they were homeless for one of two reasons. One, they were homeless because they chose a life of drugs and are now addicts who do not want to get clean, or two, because they are non-conforming law breaking criminals who never learned to be disciplined or how to follow reasonable standards of society. These people survived off of the good deeds of others, expecting free handouts and using manipulation in order to support their lives of crime.

This year, I have come face to face with some of the harsh realities of homelessness. This fall, my little sister Amy has fallen into the life of living on the streets, and regrettably I must say that her behavior fits every single thing that my parents told me about people who are homeless. She has made the decision to be homeless in the sense that she felt that she had no other choice. She told us on her 18th birthday that she was leaving. She no longer wanted to follow the rules of the house or abide by law. At the time, she was abusing drugs and struggling with alcoholism.

The one thing my parents didn't explain to me when I was a kid, was how sometimes people have monsters living inside of them, and that sometimes these monsters make people do scary things that they wouldn't normally do. These monsters go by names like Self-Hate, Depression, Grief, Rejection, Mental Illness, and PTSD, just to name a few. Amy has been fighting monsters since a very young age. She was adopted at 5 weeks old, born to a teenage mother who debated abortion for most of the pregnancy, and barely knows a father, a father who was in jail for aggravated assault

with a deadly weapon. Unbeknownst to me, her whole life she has viewed herself as nothing more than a daughter of a criminal and child worth so little that she was almost aborted. I realize those things are far from the truth; Amy is a remarkable person. As someone who was also adopted, I can relate and understand that there are distortions in our minds that tell us stuff that isn't true. I went through a long period where I struggled with my worth as well. Often, with adopted kids, it is common for them to struggle with feelings of loss, anger, and inadequacy; these are the inevitable monsters many of us carry on our backs.

Amy's monsters go by the names of Borderline Personality, Depression, and Addiction. She still fights Self-Harm sometimes as well. Amy's dependence on people came from her adoption and her feelings of being unlovable. She latches on to whoever will take her, no matter how self-deprecating being with them they may be for her. For Amy, her need for love and attention trumps absolutely everything else in her life. Borderline pulls people in, uses them, and

pushes them away. Borderline makes her unable to truly form meaningful relationships with other people because of a fear. This fear, a fear of rejection, sabotages all who come close to her. Terrified that she will be told that she is not enough, an anxious panic overrides her ability to form close relationships, creating a barrier of isolation that reinforces the ideas she already holds within her head. Addiction traps her. What started as a way to escape has become her puppeteer, a new God that she now seeks out relentlessly and endlessly. Depression shrouds her in a cloak of hopelessness, a cloak that tells her that this life on the street is all that she is worth, all that she deserves, and that there is no use in trying to escape because Depression promises to grab her by the neck and pull her back down if she ever tries.

The street has turned her into a stranger. She panhandles and steals; she lies and has let go of some of the values that I know she once held close to her heart. She is no longer the little sister I grew up with, but I know that my baby sister is still in there. I don't understand her continued choice

MY PERCEPTION ABOUT WHY PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS HASN'T CHANGED FOR THE MOST PART, BUT EXPANDED, BRANCHING INTO NEW CATEGORIES OF UNDERSTANDING. THROUGH MY OWN OBSERVATIONS, I CAN NOW SEE THE PERSON BEYOND WHAT THE SURFACE SHOWS AND A RAW VULNERABILITY WE ALL HAVE INSIDE US.

to be homeless. We have offered her the opportunity to go to rehab the second she is willing and decides to make the leap to recovery. Currently, she sleeps under the bridge near the local hospital. The weather is getting increasingly cold, and she goes days without eating. She is being beaten by an abusive boyfriend who won't let her leave him. Yesterday we found out that she has another black eye. She currently is sick with laryngitis and has no plans to visit a doctor. If I were her, even just one of these things would be a reason to go home and seek help. I don't understand where her mind is at anymore, but I know for sure that Amy is not in control. When I look in her eyes, there is no light. Replacing the once hazel glow is a pained and empty gaze that could only

belong to these horrible creatures. I know she is fighting for her life against these monsters, for I once stood in her shoes. Only by the grace of God, circumstance, and the constant support and love of those around me, I made it out alive.

Now when I think of homelessness, I think Amy. It's much harder to group everyone that lives on the streets as criminals and lowlifes when I'm thinking of my little sister. I love Amy with all my heart. Something I never realized until she was gone is that I should have been a better sister. I'm regretting years of not spending enough time with her because I honestly do not know if or when I will see her again.

My perception about why people are homeless hasn't changed for the most



THRIFT STORE CORNERS Anna Boling

part, but expanded, branching into new categories of understanding. Through my own observations, I can now see the person beyond what the surface shows and a raw vulnerability we all have inside us. I have a new understanding of the pressures and uncertainties of life, and that sometimes when people make bad decisions, they aren't always being made rationally. Life can blind even the strongest willed person into making a bad decision in a moment of great weakness. Changed now is not only my perspective on the homeless, but on people in general. Instead of seeing just the dirt and rags, and sunken eyes and starved ribs, I can now see a struggling human, one who has a story to tell. I see a person who has

lost and loved, a person who is desperately searching for something that she lacks. I can now understand that no one is inherently choosing homelessness, despite what they might say. These are all beautiful souls who have been consumed by the darkness of the monsters they fight. I see a people who at one time had a family to love them, just as my family loves Amy. I see humanity. I have always felt sorry for the homeless, but now, instead of pity, it is empathy that shines through. The old truths I was told when I was young are all still present, but the depth and insight I have gained from personal experience has dissolved the fog over my eyes and now lets me see the person inside.



CITY'S TEARS Andrew Barba

LA MAR

Molly Brown

My mother died a long time ago—
but she is sitting right there.

When I go to hug her and embrace,
When I go to her for comfort—
her torso sluggishly tears away like rotting wood
while she clings to me.

A sea of tears rushes out from beneath a scrimshawed ribcage,
fraught with cast-off netting
and love-notes in scratched, plastic bottles.

There is a memory
Of gentle hands in drab hospital rooms
where my mother strokes my hair—
her words are soft, and I am not alone.

Then the whole apartment fills with the cold, dark water—lit green from below
by the dying *Titanic*.
From above, I can see perfect, miniature whales floating in the foamy crest—
they roll and show their once white bellies,
now marred with brutal red spears named *Joseph*, *Stephen*, and *Molly*.

I want to swim,
I want to *live*—
I want the woman in the white hospital gown
Who sings into my hair about how our mothers
became the first dolphins out of GOD's jealousy.

Her fingers dig red marks in me—she whispers
with a hiss like waves that grows to a roar,
echoing thunder everywhere:
“I love you
more than anyone else **ever** will.”

NEVER ENDING STORY

David Knape

They come with their monster machines
A small army to mow
The neighbor's yard

The machines battle the stubborn grass
But it has no chance
Against their modern weapons
Their stronger wills

Blades bayonet the grass
The sounds of battle
Stir up the silence and
Choke the street
With dust and debris

And afterward
When the smoke clears
We admire the work that's done
Thinking it is taken care of

Black bags remain
Left at the curb in rows
Like cemetery crosses

Yet in the aftermath of war
We go about our business
With clean conscience
Even pride

Like grass
War re-sprouts over and over again
Resilient in its terror

Hardy as weeds
Popping up
Wherever there's a crack
In compromise or peace.

TO LOVE A GOD

Abigail Hitt

You spend your days fighting
Proving your worth to kings
Demanding honor and respect
From the common man
Everyone recognizes your name
That which strikes fear in the hearts of men.

But I see someone else
When you tell me stories of your sins
Gruesome tales of murder and revenge.
You come home covered in blood
Shaking with the memories of the day
Another day on the job.

So I will always wash you clean
Wrap you in a blanket
And hold you until you stop shaking
Because at the end of the day
They see a monster, and I a hero
But maybe we're both right.

Maybe we both see you.
Flip a coin
Choose a side
Heads or tails
Valiant warrior or ruthless killer
Who will you be tonight?



BLOOD SWEAT Alex Giovinazzo

I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE

Anna Boling

The glint of glasses at red lights look like the
burning ends of cigarettes in the night
In the car in front of me at the streetlight
And the chrome catch fire.

These words, they are not hard to say
But your feelings catch in your throat
They are cotton balls rasping against
And delay the passage to freedom.

When they finally come up
There are acidic--
Stomach bile
And these words that stick to your teeth like caramel squares
But not so sweet
And a little more foul

You don't even recall the words you spoke
But on his face you know that he is feeling them
Maybe in the same way you did when you almost choked
But his heart is weighed down by brokenness
And you have been set free.



VIRGIN LIPS Kelly McNett

MUSE ING

Michael Leyzerzon

Those lips are a silent dream

serpentine tongue

moves its syllables to the surface

Twisting and turning down the narrow pathways

murky waters

teeming with Algae

turtles meet our eyes

On the surface of our tongues

The future, the present and the past,

blood flow equals our presence

what transpires?

It's the language of time itself

Everything in its moment.

and every moment in its time.

I am a mirror for you.

You're smile bares the reflection into me.



VEILED LIPS Kelly McNett



UNTITLED Michael Nguyen

ON LOSING A SISTER

Amanullah Khan

How long it looms can someone tell.
When nights sting and the days are dark.
When mind is racing and eyes well.

When a hidden hand tolls the knell.
Heeds none, a reality stark.
How long it looms can someone tell.

When fate is wrathful it is hell.
When none but sobs and wails I hark.
When mind is racing and eyes well

I feel it now and I can spell,
The veiled caprice is a life's mark.
How long it looms can someone tell.

My chest is bursting I may yell.
Find me a nook, a vacant park.
When mind is racing and eyes well.

How hard I try, I cannot quell.
My aching begs a dose of lark.
How long it looms can someone tell,
When mind is racing and eyes well.



SELF INFATUATION Amanullah Khan



EMORY PEAK Shelby Hotz

R IS FOR REGRET

Anna Boling

Tonight the moon is the sun
And the sun is you
Trying to shine through my window
And no matter how tightly I close the blinds
The moon light still shines through
And to think it's only a reflection of.

I wish sightlessness on your star eyes.
Damn You and your hypnosis
Radiant beauty and narcosis with your own light!
I hope your moon falls sick of your ways
Finding the earth in meeting place
Causing the end of these God-forsaken days
And the end of my unhappiness.

IT ALL BEGAN WITH A THOUGHT

Sylvia S. Medel

From out of the blue,
a thought crossed my mind.
Fearing I might lose that thought
sound and rare,
with some notes ready
in my brain outlined,
quickly I took out a pen and paper.

In just a short while,
I'd written a draft of a poem.
Yet, it lacked beauty and grace,
powerful words, sounds that soothe,
cadence from verse to verse that pleases,
and smoother lines to embellish its face.

I toyed around with words,
picked here and there.
But words that I needed
didn't come by that day.
So into a drawer, the draft
I put away . . .

until that quiet night,
when from my heart I heard
soft murmurs prodding me
to polish off the draft with new-found words;
season it with grace that lifts emotion;
see that everything fits in, like a true work of art,
and elucidate the thought—the heart of the poem,
the reason for being.



LIMESTONE AND RIVERS Andrew Barba

RETRIEVAL

Jiaan Powers

The stone slipped from my hand into the river.
It was August, and I thought
If I could run backwards slowly,
I might stampede into the warm days of my childhood.

SEVENTH

Anaiyah Delight Walker
Winner of the Armstrong Middle School Writing Contest

I am divine
I am lucky
I am the seventh
Generation of beautiful, brown curly-haired Delights

I am weird
I am unique
I am the seventh
Like the ones that came before me

I am freedom
I am - not like the rest
I am the seventh
That have been held down by others for being

I am sister
I am daughter
I am the seventh
Lonely soul striving to be set apart by greatness

I am new
I am strong
I am the seventh
Inquisitive individual illustrating survival

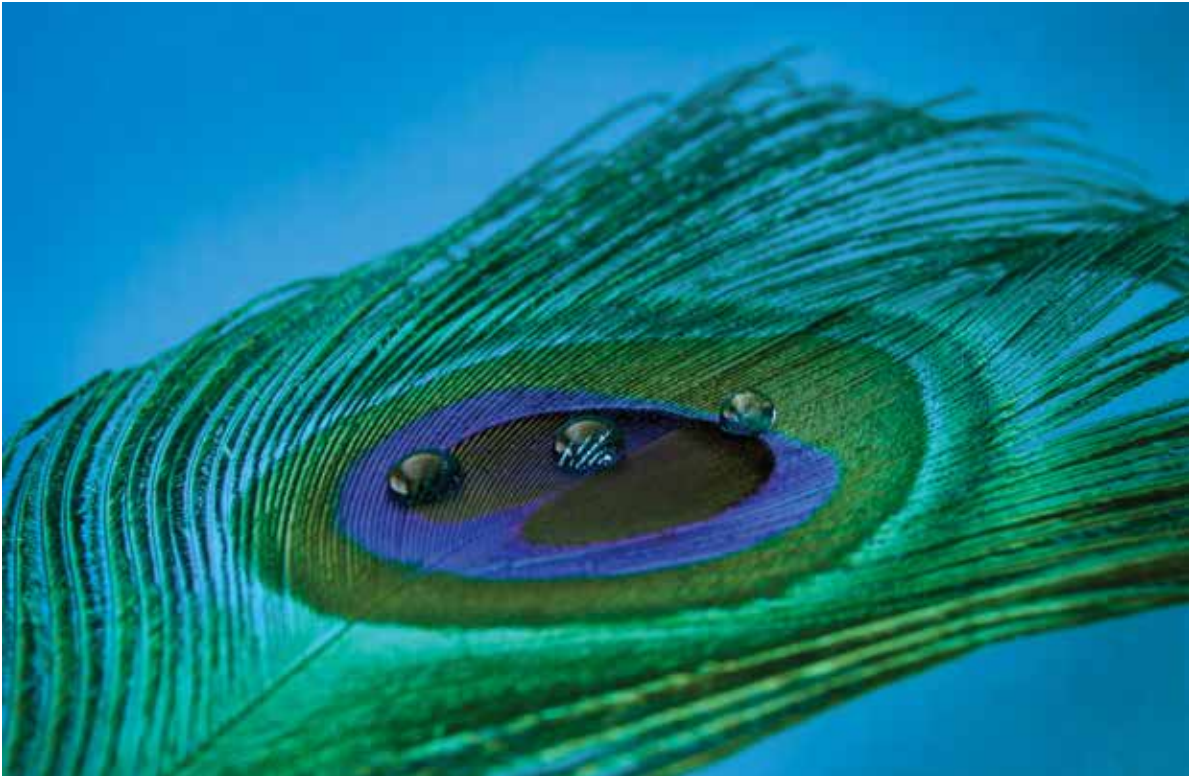
I am courage
I am determined
I am the seventh
Moving bravely ahead toward my purpose

I am Anaiyah Delight
I am whole pieces
I am the seventh
Work of art being completed by Him

I am the seventh.



WINDOW TO THE WORLD BELOW Nirisha Garimella



CAPTURE ONE Alberto Gutierrez

SHE SHALL HAVE CULTURE

Linda Ann Suddarth

My teacher asked me,
and gave me a letter.
I gave the letter to my mother,
who asked my father,
and he made a decision
that would change
my life forever.
I didn't even know
its meaning
so foreign
was the assignment.
It sat lightly
on my twelve-year-old
shoulders
so engrossed was I
in my dolls,
reading, and writing
my first novel,
Women and the West!
I would much rather
he had spent
that money
towards a canopy bed
I so wanted.
He declared:
"She should have
some culture."

Since landing in the new world
I was the first
of many generations of farmers
to do it.
Reminiscent of some old
social custom
of having the girl
be civilized and exposing her.
With that, my mother
got busy at the sewing machine
to make me a dress.
So for three times,
at three dollars per trip,

I got out of school,
got on a school bus,
and rode into
Washington, D.C.
to the national theater,
into the wonder
of red velvet chairs,
the darkened room,
and watched the lights
come up
on Leonard Bernstein
and the young people's
orchestra.



PEARS Alberto Gutierrez



NAVAHO TEA Anna Boling

THAT GUY

Claire Parde

CURLY HAIR, GREEN-SHIRT, PASTY-SKIN, TALL, SPINDLY, PALE-BLUE JEANS, OVERSTUFFED BLACK BACKPACK, WIRE-GLASSES HANGING FROM HIS POCKET, BROWN SNEAKERS, LOW-TWENTIES, GENTLE-APPEARANCES, AND A NARROW FACE. HIS WORDS WERE MUFFLED AS I INSTEAD CHOSE TO FOCUS ON THE DETAILS OF HIS PHYSICAL-STATUE. ONLY LATER DID I HOPE AND PRAY THAT HE DIDN'T NOTICE ME DOCUMENTING HIS EVERY FIBER.

Regardless of why, he evidentially noticed my lack of hearing-capabilities in that moment, and repeated himself. "Excuse me, ma'am?"

Crap. What did he want? What did I do? Where was I? Why was I here? Who was he? How did I look? What was my heart-rate? What time was it? How long had I been standing there? Would it be rude to ignore him and just turn around and keep walking? I barely had any answers in that moment of sheer nervous-girl panic, but I managed to determine that yes...yes it would be rude.

"Excuse me, ma'am, I just wanted to say how pretty you look today" He said quietly; obviously calculating the flurry of feelings on my face, and deducting that he better say something before I completely go on the fritz.

"Thanks," I think is what I said, but by the time the word was fully out, he was already waving and walking away.

Wait...had I just gone through however-many seconds of meltdown for nothing more than that? As he walked away, I remember this really weird feeling coming over me. It was a mixture of nausea, nerves, giddiness, pride, joy, icy, melty, shock, endearment, confusion, lust, embarrassment, excitement, and dread. How was I supposed to handle all of these? One minute ago my mind was focused on a sociology essay, and now I was having to in-depth analyze a social-situation; a fact which I was in no way prepared for, thanks to my complete lack of socialization (thank you homeschool).

No guy had ever said anything like that to me before. I mean, yeah, I'd been complimented before by a guy, but always in that unique double-edge sword kind of way, where you feel offended, and then guilty if you don't. Like when a guy goes, "whoa, look at you" or "you look like a firecracker." I'd heard that plenty, but...this guy was so respectable, sweet, and stingless. He wasn't after anything.

Yeah, I get that not every guy is after every unspeakable thing, but most guys at least want a conversation. Why didn't he? Why didn't he need one? Why was complimenting me simply enough? Oh, yay, more unanswerable-questions. Well, let's add one more to the laundry-list; what did he see in me?

Whoa, talk about chills. Just the thought of that one made me overwhelmed, flustered, red-cheeked, and just about everything else pleasant. I felt this warm sense as I thought about it longer, and had this epiphany; or, at least, what I would consider one a few years later, though unfortunately I don't have an epiphany-button that I can press at any moment and be all "Whoop! I just had a life-altering moment!"

He wanted nothing from me. He didn't need anything from me. He saw me as a complete-equal who was deserving of a compliment. In doing so, he helped me see myself as deserving, too.

He showed an interest unlike anyone before. He had no expectations for what we should be or should do. He didn't try to "pick me up" or give himself some sort of power. He didn't even need a conversation, because he knew that he wasn't owed a thing.

I didn't have to do anything for him. I was simply wonderful enough for that out-of-the-blue compliment. For a girl who has been told how ridiculous and idiotic she is countless times by countless jerks, actually understanding that is kind of incredible. Understanding that I didn't have to work for his attention. Understanding that I didn't have to pay him a debt of gratitude afterwards. Understanding that, despite how ridiculous and idiotic I so-often felt, he saw something brighter; something that even I couldn't fully see, but now know is there. I know they say you shouldn't feel important because some guy pays attention to you, but...sometimes it takes someone to help you feel important.

I DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING FOR HIM. I WAS SIMPLY WONDERFUL ENOUGH FOR THAT OUT-OF-THE-BLUE COMPLIMENT. FOR A GIRL WHO HAS BEEN TOLD HOW RIDICULOUS AND IDIOTIC SHE IS COUNTLESS TIMES BY COUNTLESS JERKS, ACTUALLY UNDERSTANDING THAT IS KIND OF INCREDIBLE.

Later on, I would consider all of this to be a part of what I now think of as a natural-strength in my communication skills; a vibrancy towards others that not many have. Later on, I would understand that this moment, as wonderfully-confusing as it was, helped to establish the confidence I now stand and depend on.

I didn't know any of that, however, that afternoon as I stood in the J-wing, feeling my unforgettable mixture of nausea, nerves, giddiness, pride, joy, icy, melty, shock, endearment, confusion, lust, embarrassment, excitement, and dread. I just knew that he made me feel gosh-darn wonderful.

My hands were trembling as I watched him walk away. I was trying to comprehend this exchange when, all of a sudden, I heard his voice again.

"You dropped something"

Eyes widening, throat-catching, cheeks-flushing, stomach-churning, knees-shaking, and breath-shortening, I looked down to see my sociology-notes sprawled along the carpet at my shoes. Oh cool; I even got to leave a memorable impression.





UNTITLED Michael Nguyen

WHAT THE RED WITCH REQUIRES

Natalie VanHecke

ANNORA WAS WHAT ONE WOULD CALL A RED-WITCH. IT WASN'T HER FAULT, SHE WOULD SAY, BATTING HER EYELASHES SWEETLY AS SHE PEERED UP THROUGH HER IVORY HAIR. WITCHES SIMPLY DIDN'T CHOOSE THEIR NATURE, THEIR DISTRICT OF MAGIC. HOW THEY USED IT, HOWEVER, WAS A MATTER OF A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT MANNER. She hummed a little at the thought, twirling her fingers above her cauldron and dropped a ball of her raw magic into it. The red glow caused the cauldron to bubble and she withdrew her wooden staff from her back. With the red crystal that was cradled at the top of her staff, she tested the murky liquid in her cauldron. The bubbling of her cauldron ceased and a wicked giggle burst from her mouth. After putting her staff on a nearby counter, she reached her gloved hand into the boiling waters; from them, she pulled a small gem.

"This is yours, sir. Your strength will become something of which every man can only dream he possesses; you will surely win the tourney." She held out the gem to the customer who had come to her an hour beforehand. When he reached for it, Annora lifted her hand away from his grasp. "But first, your payment."

The man grumbled a complaint, but offered her the palm of his hand. She fetched her staff and a small knife. She grabbed his hand and sliced it open, the red droplets of blood dripping onto the wooden floor of her shack. She touched the tip of her staff's crystal to the center of his injury. His gasp of pain sent shivers down her spine as a deep shade of blue leaked into the crystal. Annora set her staff back onto the counter, setting the gem on his palm. "I wish you good luck, sir. If you wouldn't mind, I ask you recommend me to your companions."

He nodded. "I will recommend you to my companions for your assistance. You were quite helpful."

"Now, if you don't mind, I'm a very busy witch, and I haven't got all day." She motioned him towards the door. He dipped his head and obliged to her request. Annora's dark smile only appeared once the man was gone. She turned to her staff, her hands hovering over the crystal that was now as blue as the deep seas. Murmuring a few words, she soaked the power up into her hands and waved it

towards her chest. She pushed it inside of herself and took a shuddering breath. "Mm. Much better than the last one."

The bell on the door to her shop jingled and she turned to face her customer, who stiffened when she saw her. A smile played on her lips. "Don't mind the white hair and fancy red outfit, darling." Annora motioned to the velvet hat and her knee-length witch robes of the same shade. "It's simply tradition. Now, how may I be of assistance to you?"

"I-I heard that you used to have black hair!" The young girl blurted out and motioned to her white braid, causing the witch to laugh.

"I did, once. People rumor that the black drained out of my hair because I was so evil, or it drained out of it because I was so pure. There are rumors all about me, darling. My ageless face, my youthful body, my wicked ways," Annora purred. "I will admit, I used to be quite the nasty young witch, but long ago I saw the wrong of my ways and have since become a new person. But, let's not discuss me any longer, for you came with a request, did you not?"

"I-I'm in love with a man I cannot be with." The girl shuffled her feet. "He's to be wed to a monstrous woman. How do I make him mine?"

"Oh, darling, how glad I am you decided to visit my shop instead of another's. Affairs of the heart always were my favorite. Come now, come inside." She ushered the young girl farther into her shop. "Do try not to be too alarmed, after all, the townsfolk weren't lying when they called me a witch." She waited for the girl's nod before she continued to the cauldron, the girl in tow.

"I have several methods I could use. What would you wish upon the girl your prince is to be wed to?"

"I want her out of my way. B-But I wish her no harm!"

"That can be done with ease." Annora flashed a vicious smile at the girl. When she formed a red sphere of magic in her hands, the girl gaped at her. "Fortunately, I know a bit of powerful magic; it's a skill I've always been able to wield. I find you intriguing, child, so I will ask you not to laugh when I admit I use it to help those who are lonely and desperate. People of all ages flock to my cauldron, begging, 'Please, Annora, please give us spells.' Do I help them? Well, how could I refuse such a desperate plea!" She threw the sphere into the cauldron and went over to her shelf of ingredients. "Soul of a dragon, heart of a newt, a few other items..." She pulled a piece of hair from the girl's head and dropped it into the cauldron along with the ingredients. With the head of her staff, she stirred the mixture. "Now, why don't we discuss your payment."

"O-Of course." The girl stammered. "What is it you ask of me?"

Annora hummed in thought as she stirred. "I only ask for a single drop of your blood and a single lock of your beautiful golden hair.

"Th-That's all?"

Annora waved her free hand, conjuring up a scroll. "Just sign on the bottom line, darling and we're all set."

Annora supplied the girl a quill from her countertop. The girl hastily signed the scroll before returning it to Annora's grasp. With a wave of her hand, a red aura surrounded the scroll and placed it high on one of her potion shelves.

The only light in the small shop came from the red glow of the cauldron as it dulled to a pink. A spell poured from Annora's mouth and the liquid inside the cauldron exploded. Amongst the pink smoke, Annora found her treasure and snatched it. She handed the girl a necklace with a vial strung along it. "Pour part of this in your beloved's wine, part of it in your wine, and part of it into the wine of the woman he is to marry."

The girl nodded and held her hand out to the witch, who sliced it open with her blade. Annora held a vial underneath the cut to catch the blood and used the same knife to cut off a piece of the girl's hair. "Goodbye, darling."

After the door closed behind the girl, Annora let out a wicked laugh. "She'll never meet her soulmate now. After all, you can't have a soulmate without a soul!"

"I suppose humans will believe anything you tell them." Her murmur was dark as she dropped the hair into the vial of blood and poured it into her cauldron. Annora dipped her staff into it and a purple orb appeared in the air. She retrieved the orb and pushed it into her chest with a deep breath. Her shop door flew open as she was drawing her hands away from her breasts. A young man clad in iron armor stood in her doorway. "I knew it." He snarled. "You Red-Witches are all the same."

"S-Sir, I'm afraid I don't understand." Her lower lip wobbled and she took a step back. "Y-Yes, I am a Red-Witch. But I don't make my deals like other Red-Witches do. I don't deal in souls; I simply take a lock of hair and a bit of blood to use in my future recipes."

"We both know that's a lie, Lady Annora." The Hunter snapped.

The façade dropped and she laughed. "It's been a very long time since I've seen you, Lord Rhysand. Not all Hunters have such an ageless face. If I didn't know better, I would say you have a bit of witch blood."

"That's enough, Mother." He drew his sword. "I've come to put an end to your wicked ways."

"Did you now? You came to kill your own defenseless mother? What shall I tell your father?"

"Don't bring him into this!" He snarled, taking a step forward. "And you are far from defenseless."

"You're right." She snatched her staff from the cauldron and pointed it towards him. "I'm not afraid to kill you, Rhysand."

"Good." The flash of Rhysand's snow white hair was all she saw before he was beside her. She raised her staff in defense, blocking his blow as a flow of spells echoed from her mouth. Fireballs and balls of energy flew towards her son. He was up against her, inside her shields in moments. There was a brief glimpse of silver and then she was grabbing his shoulders with a gasp. The iron dagger plunged deep inside her chest, pushing all the way through to poke out her back. "Goodbye, Mother. You shall never harm another soul, nor harness it for your own good."

He dropped her to the ground when she fell against him, limp and lifeless. He stared at her for only a moment, fighting a grimace at her bloodied body. Then he was gone.

There was a groan and Annora sat up with a quiet laugh. The fun had only just begun.

THE LOVE GAME

A SPOKEN WORD

Kelly Anne Tiece

Dramatis Personae

Pawn/ Queen I

Pawn/ Queen II

Chorus

Pawn I

When I was nine, my mother told me,
“games are for children,”
as she smeared bright red lipstick across her
mouth just the way he liked it.

Pawn II

I can't remember when I started playing the
game with stacked dices.

They said the rules are easy, but I don't like
rules that's why I became a poet.

Pawn I

But I played the game despite myself
as many others do,
and these rules became infused into my DNA.

Chorus

Dating necessity's to abide by:

Pawn I

Don't text him first you'll seem desperate.

Pawn II

And put on make up to hide imperfections.

Pawn I

Don't dress like a prude but don't dress like a slut.

Pawn II

Drink only two drinks cause no one likes a drunk.

Pawn I

Laugh at his jokes even when they're not funny.

Pawn II

Don't sleep with him on the first date honey.

Pawn I

Reach for the check but don't ever pay.

Pawn II

An injection a day keeps the infidelity away.

Pawn I

Don't speak your mind because he doesn't
mind what you speak.

Pawn II

When mad give him the silent treatment
for a week.

Pawn I

And when he comes home always
have dinner ready.

Pawn II

But go on a diet because he won't like you heavy.

Pawn I

The bigger the ring the better the marriage.

Pawn II

When he messes up hold his faults as leverage.

Pawn I

Don't tell him the truth because
he doesn't want to know.

Pawn II

And when you cry don't ever let it show.

Chorus

And we wonder why

Pawn I

After ten years, we don't recognize
the person sitting across the table
as we are drafting out the divorce.

Chorus

Check.

Pawn II

Because the rules have become so
engrained in our brain
that they became social norms.

Pawn I

People brush them off as harmless necessities

Chorus

with no need for reform
but,

Pawn I

What about the girl more concerned
over her relationship status
than what she thinks.

Pawn II

What about the guy who spends his tuition
on a date with a girl
only in it for the drinks.

Pawn I

How about my friend dating the guy
with his bases loaded
his wife at the home plate.

Chorus

Check.



CHRISTINE Alfred Long

Pawn II

And the girl starving herself at dinner time
because she's worried about her weight.

Pawn I

Or the girl too afraid to leave a man that hits
her because she's afraid to lose something.

Pawn II

Don't forget the man that cries at night
because he feels
he's worth nothing.

Chorus

These are just misconceptions of the definitions
that we know nothing about.

The meaning of love can't be defined by rules
written by people who haven't lived them out.
Check.

Pawn I

But we continue to play until we are used,
bruised and fused to hate,

Chorus

And people like us are just muses of the love game.
We're done.

Check.

Queen I

Do not pass go.

Queen II

Do not collect 200 dollars.

Queen I

Because my mother once told me
games are for children.

Chorus

And we're not kids anymore.
Check mate.



CHRISTINE Alfred Long

